Fairbrother's Fancies.

Embracing a Few Remarks On Things In General.

There is a yawning vacuum in the universe waiting for some man to write a book on the proposition of "Theory vs. The Real Thing." I went out the other Sunday to hear a gentleman, who claimed to be a scientist, give a little talk on the effects of alcohol on the human system—and after he had completed his discourse I was told that he never in all his life had taken a drink of whiskey. He spun a fine theory—talked a long time and told of the wonderful progress science had made along the line, but he had no evidence to offer except heresay evidence— and that oftentimes is not in court.

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No matter what he said, that was his business and his theory, but if I were going to take the evidence of the effect of whiskey on the human brain—I mean now what effect it would have as to stimulation, etc., I would rather hear the evidence of the man who had been up against it. The whiskey question is one that for a long time has been before the American people, as well as before people of the Eastern world, and I do not intend to settle it this morning. In fact, I am not going to introduce evidence to show what it will do or what it will not do. But I am going to say when a man has been up against it; after he has formed a habit for it; after he has been its slave for a long time—he knows better than any theorist what it will do and what it will not do for him. The man who has taken the thirty-third degree in the corn likker of to-day is better qualified to tell me, or to tell you, how it effected his brain and his nerves than a man who never tasted it.

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It is not only in the whiskey problem, but in the drug problem, and in the money question, and a whole long line of questions before the people, that a book, such as I have suggested: "Theory vs. The Real Thing," is needed, and needed at once. The Real Thing is what the world yearns for, and when a man goes up against that, no matter much in what line—wildcats or corn likker—he knows what to do.

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If you go back in your dictionary you will find every now and then a word recorded and the definition given, and the information imparted that the word is now obsolete. In other words, the lexicographers have found that the world has given it up—abandoned it, so to speak—and it is no longer good. Again, you will find a word marked "rare," and that means that it is seldom used. And all the time there are neologists who are throwing out new words, gathering them from the slang at first, and afterwards adopting them because they are expressive and because they fill the bill. The other day I received from a gentleman living in Oregon a letter, in which he said he liked certain writings, because the fellow seemed to give everything its proper "follence of jestis."

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"Follence of jestis"—get on to that! Now, there is nothing in the books that would show what the man meant; nothing to indicate his meaning—except, I knew what he meant, and so do you, and yet he had expressed himself and used a word that is not in the language. He liked it because it gave to everything "its proper follence of jestis"—and he had expressed himself, fully, clearly and concisely. What more could he have done had he exhausted a dictionary?

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What I want to know is, why, in the name of progression, some enterprising scientific gent doesn't revise the Zodiac? We have had revisions of the Bible; we have had discussions of one kind and another on the questions of church; theology has played an important part in revision; we have had all sorts of changes—even to an attempt to revise the tariff—but the twelve signs of the Zodiac still obtain, and the old family almanac yet carries the lamb and the goat and the lobster—just as it did when I was a boy and you were a boy—or girl. So far as I know, the signs are all right yet, but it looks like we should change it around a little, just as a matter of keeping up with the procession. The Zodiac cuts lots of ice with people who believe in almanacs and their weather signs, which rarely ever come true, and I suggest that a congressional committee be appointed to do something. If Congress refuses to act, I think it is up to Governor Swanson and Governor Glenn to appoint a committee, with power to act, and at least get up some new signs for a Virginia and North Carolina Zodiac. I will be pleased to receive sealed letters in a plain envelope on this subject.

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I have been advocating for many years and am now going to appeal to the great publicity that The Times-Dispatch will give me for my hobby, for a seven-cent piece. We tried a three-cent piece, but that didn't amount to much—it was always a copper or a nickel in most transactions—but a seven-cent piece would really fill a long-felt want. A million dollars could be issued at a cost of a few thousand, and there is a demand for such a coin. It would help the poor. So often a boy runs an errand, and you do not feel like parting with a dime, and a seven-cent piece would fit in in great shape. So many thousands of articles are sent by mail that could be procured for seven cents that cannot be made for five cents and ten cents is too much, so I have always contended that a seven-cent piece would be what we long have sought, even if we haven't mourned because we got it not.

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It used to be that the copper was scarce. The nickel was only recognized in the east. I recall that twenty years ago on the Pacific coast everything was a "bit"—twelve and a half cents—and it was a short bit or a long bit. If you wanted a piece of tobacco and handed the merchant a quarter you got back a dime, and if you handed him a dime you got the same amount of tobacco.

In other words there was no smaller coin than a dime recognized. But that day has gone and we are getting to make change in pennies—have for a long time, and the seven-cent piece would come in and fit like the paper on the wall. These great reforms are brought about by agitation—and that's why I'm agitating. I wrote to Charley Dawes about it when he was Comptroller of the Currency, and he told me he was surprised that I was wanting to short-change the boys. But, nevertheless, this is no joke and I expect to see the seven-cent piece come in and when it comes it will be a coin much in demand.

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How about the chromo? The fast printing presses that produce many colors at one impression, like the comic supplement of The Times-Dispatch, have sent the chromo glimmering. Is it that, or has the world wearied of color? Before chromatic printing came in, the world adorned its walls with steel plates, if it couldn't afford oil paintings—and they came high. When chromos were introduced, not so many years ago, everybody was wild over 'em.

You couldn't pick up a newspaper without seeing about three hundred advertisements with the glad tidings expressed, that if you sent twenty-five cents you would get something and a chromo. Chromos were all the rage. Men traveled through the country selling chromos—and every wall in the land was decorated with a chromo of one style or another—and to-day you never hear of them. You see imitation oil paintings, but the old-fashioned chromo is left out of the assortment, and the pen and ink picture is the fad. If it isn't a Gibson picture, it is something else done in pen and ink. The zinc process of etching has come in, and the half tone and the three tone process and all of that—and yet there has never been the craze over these vastly superior works of art, as there was over the old chromo, which bobbed in less than thirty years ago, and which bobbed out without saying good-bye. Is it because the world wearied of color—or did they get so common that they were regarded as being too cheap? This should be explained.

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Another thing I want to know about: That is why is it that school books are always printed in big type? A child is supposed to have good eyes, and should be capable of reading small print, but the school books are always produced in large type, and the newspapers, which the old folk are compelled to read, are in small type. It would seem to me that this should be reversed. The old folk are forced to read small type, and surely their eyes are not as good as the kid's eyes. I just mention this as one of the things worth thinking about as we jog along together, John Anderson, my Jo.

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The winter is now fairly well along—infact, it is spring, and I am allowed freedom of expression upon a subject that I have fairly panted to get at. And that is the subject of style of cloaks worn by women. I know married men who are assured each winter that the style has changed, and that a new cloak must be forthcoming, and this winter just passed I have faithfully kept tab on what was doing. And I solemnly assert that I have counted over four hundred styles and rarely ever saw two alike on the same day. I have seen long cloaks and short cloaks and big sleeved cloaks and small sleeved cloaks—and I've seen 'em cut in all the different fashions and styles that a man could imagine and some that no one would have imagined.

I'm not kicking. I enter no protest. I hold that a woman should have a new outfit of toggery just as often as a man can afford to buy it for her, or oftener, if his credit is good. I only object to the proposition that the style has changed when it hasn't changed and couldn't change. It may be that a woman tires of the same style garment, and she wants to change her particular style, but I here assert that this past winter the latest style comprised all the styles worn since Eve was a girl blowing soap bubbles in the Garden of Eden.

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That's one reason why I am a man. I can take my old Jameswinger coat and wear it to a frazzle—let it get as smooth and sleek as a French plate mirror, and while it may look a little rusty, I know that it is in style. Sometimes the fashion plate will make 'em a little longer or a little shorter, but, taken all in all, a Jimswinger is the stuph, and you know it. So with a hat. You can buy a soft hat and feel that the style is yours. The derby will change a little—but you don't change unless you have the price—while a beaver—well, a beaver.

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Suppose you listen to what I think about a beaver. I am opposed to a short man wearing a beaver, and a real tall man, especially if a little stoop-shouldered, looks out of joint in one, and I am about to say that a beaver is not what a man thinks it is when he blows himself for nine dollars for one. However, we'll let the beaver pass and we'll talk a little about the style of woman's toggery. They tell me that the only reason the women change the style of their gowns so much is simply to have something to do, and from some of the outlandish styles presented every few years, I am inclined to think that it must be true.

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I see now that wall-eyed science proposes to photograph thought. That is, some fellow who has been investigating says it can be done—that wireless telegraphy has demonstrated the possibility. Won't this, if it comes to pass, be a pretty kettle of fish. Imagine a man going a-calling to see his girl some Sunday night and taking his thought kodak along and opening it up the next day and developing the thought waves his darling had of him.

When he sees on the camera the fatal words that long about nine o'clock she was wishing that he would ring off and go home—and he recalls that he remained until eleven—wouldn't that jar him? And then if it would happen that she had her kodak and took a snap thought of his think-tank and saw that he was dead in love and intended to propose. What a magnificent opportunity it would give her to exclaim that "this is so sudden" when he finally mustered up the courage to speak his mind and heart. And if he happened to get a stray thought that ventured out from her brain to the effect that she wished he would propose if he intended to, and save this awful suspense—how manfully he could declare his undying love and ask her to say yes, when he knew all the time what she was thinking. Maybe, though, that would spoil the romance—maybe that would take from love's young dream all the hallowed remembrances that in after years sustain.

Maybe it would make a mess of the whole business—so I hope, somehow or other, that the machine will refuse to work—at least in that regard.

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However, such a machine would be a sweet boon for a politican. He could poll a township by photograph and come pretty nearly telling where "he was at" long before the election was pulled. Such a machine would be excellent in the hands of a collector. You could draw a bead on the fellow who was going to pay you to-morrow, and it would be great consolation to go home and develop about a hundred snap-shots and find that the fellows to whom you had presented bills had wished you in China or even a hotter place. I tell you there are great possibilities in this thing, and science, if it keeps on, will make a man, unless he is a lobster, be what it was intended he should be.

Al Fairbrother

Chicago's Style in Husbands.

Mrs. Dearborn—"Did you see that Mrs. Le Salle at the reception?"

Mrs. Wabash—"Yes, and I do wish she'd get another husband! She's been going about with that same one for nearly four months!"—Yonkers Statesman.

Whims of the Idler.

The Human Nature That's in Folks

After all, when we have carefully weighed the multudinous freaks of cussedness which show themselves in people, we suddenly discover that the best thing about folks is their human nature.

Now, just what human nature is—how you should define it or say something clever about it—is more than even a Ph. D. college professor can explain, and yet when we meet the article we forthwith recognize it, hug the thing to our bosoms and are exceeding glad.

The aristocracy would have us believe that 'tis only the poor-white contingent who show the human nature in themselves.

And if we were to accept the doctrine literally it would force us to conclude that the aristocracy, since they eschew the qualities pertaining to humbler folks, must be possessed of some other kind of nature not human—dog nature, for instance, or cat nature or possibly swine nature.

But we charitably refuse to yield to the dictates of the aristocracy, and upon investigation, we find that the pedigreed class have even more human nature than the rest of us.

The very moment we decide that they don't even breathe the same air we do, we unexpectedly see them catch a whiff of the slaughter pens or drink in an aerial souvenir of the crematory with their proboscides, and then, by the way they hold their noses we realize that they are just like the rest of us.

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Glorious it is thus to realize the common brotherhood of man. And when we recognize the fact through the medium of some individual who for years has been pinnacled before us on the loftiest heights of dignity and fame, we feel like crackling our heels with joy.

For, after all, it is the little things that make up the olla podrida of life—the nasty, measley, pleasyune little things which are the vermin of our lives and which we sneakingly hide from other people.

To illustrate, there have always been some of us who felt more kindly towards Dr. Sam Johnson because he had a habit of carrying away from the tables of his hosts all the orange peel which came within his reach. The Doctor has also drawn closer to us, despite the fact that he has lain so long in his grave, because we are reliably informed that he had a dainty little way of spilling gravy on his vest or of choking himself in his voracity.

On general principles the habit of bespattering one's waistcoat with gravy is not one to be envied and yet so many of us have done the same thing—let alone our shirt front—that it is absolutely soothing to note the distinguished precedent. When we unearth facts such as those just cited we fly triumphantly with them to the person who, at the marriage altar, has arrogated unto herself the exclusive right to criticize us for our weakness. Human nature, by the way, is said by wives to show itself only in husbands, whereas husbands think it shows itself solely in wives. The truth is, that it pertains to one and all of us alike.

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A certain man who delights in studying the human nature in other folks—all the while flattering himself that it is absolutely lacking in his own make-up—contributes one of his own personal experiences to this column. He says that for half a life-time the study of George Washington's history was one of his chief recreations, but during all of this period he was never able to catch George in his bath-robe, as it were—that is, never quite able to bring his mind to think that our country's father ever came down off his pedestal or figured in any undignified experience.

At last, however, the Washingtonian enthusiast came across a biography which quoted certain letters written by the incipient President when he was only sixteen years old.

One of these communications describes a rather uncomfortable surveying expedition made on an isolated part of Lord Fairfax's estate. When the party retired at night George was not slow to discover that he had invaded a large and resentful colony of fleas. These interesting little animals were prompt in demonstrating the fact that they didn't purpose letting George Washington or anybody else dislodge them.

Says the distinguished youth in describing the experience: "I was glad to get up (as soon as ye light was carried from us I put on my clothes and lay as my companions). Had we not been very tired, I anr sure we should not have slep'd much that night. I made a Promise not to sleep so from that time forward, chusing rather to sleep in ye open air before a fire, as will appear hereafter.

Wednesday, 16th. We set out early and finished about one o'clock and then Travelled up to Frederick Town, where our Baggage came to us. We cleaned ourselves (to get Rid of ye Game we had catched the night before"), etc., etc.

"This homely little story is the biography of my immortal friend," says the Washington student, "has endeared George more to me than all his martial achievements, all his ponderous state papers and all his superb horse sense. It has brought him down to my level, for I have been bitten by fleas myself."

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It is a sweet thing for those whose appetites cut an important figure in their lives, to know that this particular ramification of human nature for centuries has been so common that it hardly ceases to notice. And while stupefield and half terrorseful under—or on the outside—of the burden of a Sunday dinner, one becomes considerably comforted on recalling the fact that some of the world's greatest men have stopped making history long enough to eat—and to eat like cormorants.

John Lothrop Motley has this to tell of Charles the Fifth of Spain: "He could remain in the saddle day and night and endure every hardship but hunger. He was addicted to vulgar and miscellaneous incontinency. He was an enormous eater. He breakfasted at five, on a fowl seethed in milk and dressed with sugar and spices. After this he went to sleep again. He dined at twelve, partaking always of twenty dishes. He supped twice; at first soon after vespers and the second time at midnight or one o'clock, which meal was, perhaps, the most solid of the four. After meat he ate a great quantity of pastry and sweetmeats and he irrigated every repast by vast draughts of beer and wine."

It is a safe guess that Charles was trying all the patent medicines in his kingdom before he went to his grave, and the historian himself tells us that the Emperor's stomach succumbed after the forty years' hard service imposed upon it. But, great Scott, how that man must have enjoyed life ere he actually began experiments with anti-dyspeptic drops and little pink pills.

But, after all, these foregoing illustrations smack of grossness, nor does one come much nearer the ideal of human nature on learning that good spinster, Queen Bess, had eighty wigs (mostly red) with her "weeds" (costume) of every country; that she took all she could get, even "nightcaps," which were among the propitiary presents sent her by the Queen of Scots; that she "took with both hands and gave, as she herself truly said, only with her little finger;" that she even allowed the gallant Leicester to help her with her toilet, but that at forty-five she got—Oh! so hopping mad—when Talbot, the Earl of Shrewsbury's son, accidentally caught her one May morning in her nightdress.

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The truth about human nature is that it isn't pretty and it isn't calculated to inspire poetry when one goes to analyze it. On the contrary, it invariably gives us a pleasureable shock—a shock because it is always surprising to find in somebody else something which we secretely feared was our own exclusive attribute—and a pleasure because it tickles us to catch our fellow-mortals in a weakness which is just as bad, if not worse, than our own.

In truth, the human nature we discover in other people is always worse than our own. And that's what makes us enjoy it—we profit so much by the comparison. And the way it yanks celebrities and heroes off their pedestals is a caution! It is the greatest weapon of iconoclasm—the universal panacea for wounded vanity (our own) and the one great brush that lurs all humankind.